

Introducing the INGSA and NASEM Guidebook on Countering Zoonotic Spillover of High Consequence Pathogens in Southeast Asia

On March 14, 2024, INGSA and NASEM had the distinct privilege of unveiling our Guidebook at the U.S.-Singapore Third Country Training Program (TCTP) on the health benefits of taking action on climate change, a partnership between the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Department of State. This event marked a pivotal moment in our ongoing mission to address pressing zoonotic spillover challenges in the region.

The TCTP event centered around the discussion of five key environmental drivers of health security, including (1) land use change, (2) urbanization and globalization, (3) wildlife trade, trafficking, and markets, (4) climate change, and (5) degraded ecosystem services. The TCTP was an ideal event to promote and put into action the different guidebook modules as they consider these environmental drivers when recommending ways to manage and prevent zoonotic spillover in the live animal supply chain in the Southeast Asia and Pacific Island regions. The guidebook, crafted over a 2-year period, stands as a testament to our commitment to evidence-based policymaking and collaborative engagement. Drawing upon real-world data and insights gathered from experts within the live animal supply chain, the Guidebook offers a multifaceted approach to counter the zoonotic spillover.

During the event, Meghan Davis (by VTC) NASEM Committee Chair and Nancy Connell, NASEM led the discussion with an overview of the guidebook, including the context and goals of the project followed by each module's salient points. Subsequently, the challenges of combating zoonotic spillover in the region were presented by NASEM and INGSA-Asia guidebook team members Kelvin Lim, Director, National Parks Board, Singapore; Dirk Pfeiffer, Professor, City University of Hong Kong; Tan Cheng Siang, Associate Professor, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak; Yoganand Kandasamy (by VTC) former Regional Lead for Wildlife and Wildlife Crime WWF-Greater Mekong.

In the second part of the event, Audrey Thevenon (NASEM), Hazel Yean Ru Ann (INGSA) and Nancy Connell facilitated two interactive participatory activities drawn from Module 6 and Module 8 of the guidebook with the TCTP participants. These participatory activities guided the participants in identifying key stakeholders across a wide spectrum of actors, decision-makers, and partners who should be involved in preventing and responding to spillover events along animal value chains in Southeast Asia. The participants then explored the direct and indirect impacts and implications of drivers (described above) at different points and in multiple contexts along the live animal supply chain, examining the impacts of the enterprise that might lead to spillover events.

The TCTP served not only as a platform for the presentation of our Guidebook but also as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue with regional officials on the practical application of its content. Engaging with participants from across the Southeast Asia and Pacific Island regions, the INGSA and NASEM team explored strategies for leveraging the guidebook to effectively combat real-world zoonotic events within the region and got a better understanding on how the guidebook might be used. The team learned a lot from the TCTP participants. We extend our sincere gratitude to all those involved who made INGSA and

NASEM's vision a reality and look forward to continued collaboration in pursuit of our shared goals.